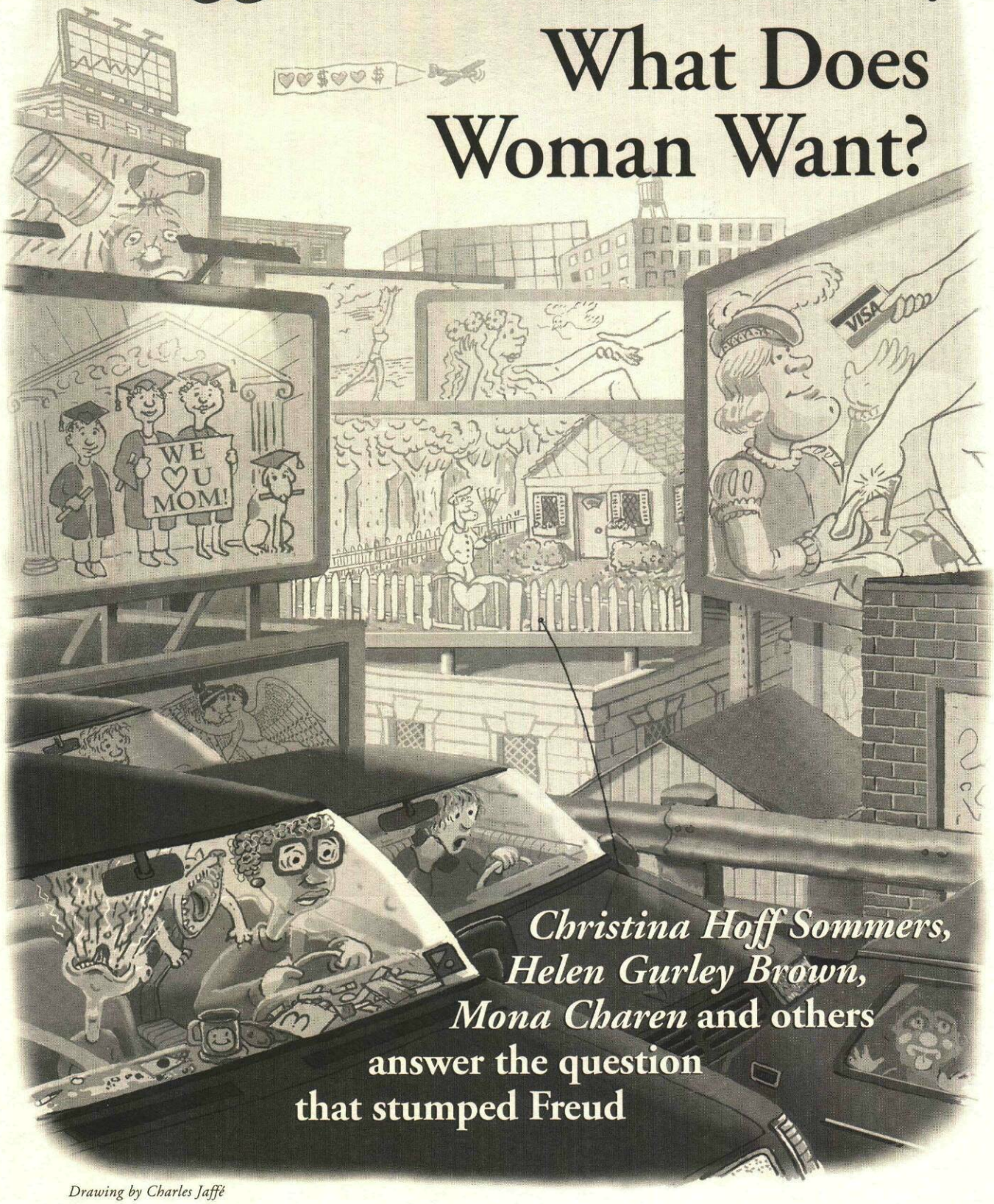
Summer 1996 ◆ Number 8

The Women's Quarterly

What Does Woman Want?



Christina Hoff Sommers, Helen Gurley Brown, Mona Charen and others answer the question that stumped Freud

Drawing by Charles Jaffé

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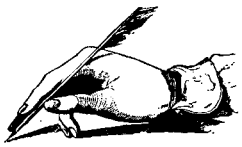
Diary



The Shirt Gap

Sometimes I receive unintentionally funny news releases from earnest women's organizations. The most recent example was dispatched by a Washington watchdog group called Women, Men and Media (executive director: Betty Friedan). In ominous tones it reported that, "Front page newspaper references to women declined for a second year in a row in 1996, constituting only fifteen percent of front page references."

The obvious response is, So what? Or should we all be lobbying harder for equal numbers of female murderers? Nonetheless, the group's report was the subject of much hand-wringing by local columnists. (If only the Unabomber had been a woman!)

This habit of confusing statistical parity with true equality seems ingrained, not just among lobby groups and journalists, but everywhere. I recently listened to a BBC radio documentary purporting to reveal the prevalence of sexism in America. The host supported his gloomy thesis with a list of statistics. Despite thirty years of feminist activism, he noted, women on average still earn less than men and still do most of the housework and child care. The host even interviewed a woman who complained that her dry cleaner charged more for her shirts than her husband's, although the shirts were identical in style. Are women, the host despaired, destined never to catch up to men?

The answer is yes, of course. But is this necessarily bad? Modern-day feminism is fueled by the conviction that until men and women perform statistically the same in all areas of life, they can't be equal as citizens. And feminists go on to assume that the only possible reason for persistent statistical imbalance must be male discrimination.

This is an absurd way to view the world—and equality. Other figures, after all, could make a similarly compelling case that American men are victims of rampant sexism. Over the past twenty years the average wages of male workers have plummeted by eleven percent, while the wages of women have risen six percent (and as much as sixteen percent for female executives). Men face unique risks in the litigious American workplace: Wal-Mart is appealing a 1995 court ruling that awarded $50 million to a woman who complained her supervisor joked about her figure. On the domestic front, men are still responsible for taking out the garbage, cleaning the garage, barbecuing, and moving sofas around ("No, sorry dear, it was better where it was").

This isn't to say that acts of discrimination don't occur. But in the aggregate, the statistical disparities between the sexes cannot intelligently be explained as "inequality." Take the figures on earnings. The most comprehensive analysis of the wage gap was done by economist June O'Neill (who now heads the Congressional Budget Office). She found that women have actually achieved the magical parity with men in the work force—that is, until they become mothers. After women give birth, according to O'Neill, many factors conspire to push down women's wages: women take leave or drop out of the workforce, they take less demanding (and thus lower paying) jobs, they go part-time. Those who consider this a social problem—rather than a rational economic choice by mothers—should blame our kids, not chauvinist employers.

Another of my favorite statistics emerged from last year's hyper-earnest United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Organizers praised Sri Lanka for being the country with the lowest wage gap between men and women. Funny, but you didn't see hordes of Western women suddenly storming the airports with their rolling luggage as a result, eager to emigrate to this paradise of female equality.

Still, one of the BBC's claims, at least, strikes me as indisputably true and unfair: women do pay more to get their shirts cleaned. Why? Fortunately, there happens to be a dry cleaner on the ground floor of the BBC building in Washington. I stopped by the other day to ask a pleasant Korean lady if she did, in fact, charge her female customers more for their shirts. She admitted that yes, she did. The men's shirts, she explained, could be done by machine. But because the women's shirts were smaller and constantly differed in style and fabric, they had to be done by hand.

So it seems that until the government can mandate all women's shirts to be made identically, as men's are—or better, that the sexes can be manufactured like men's shirts—this shocking discrimination will continue.

~ Danielle Crittenden

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The Women's Quarterly

Summer 1996 • No. 8

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The Women's Quarterly (ISSN:1079-6622) is published by the Independent Women's Forum, a non-profit Section 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

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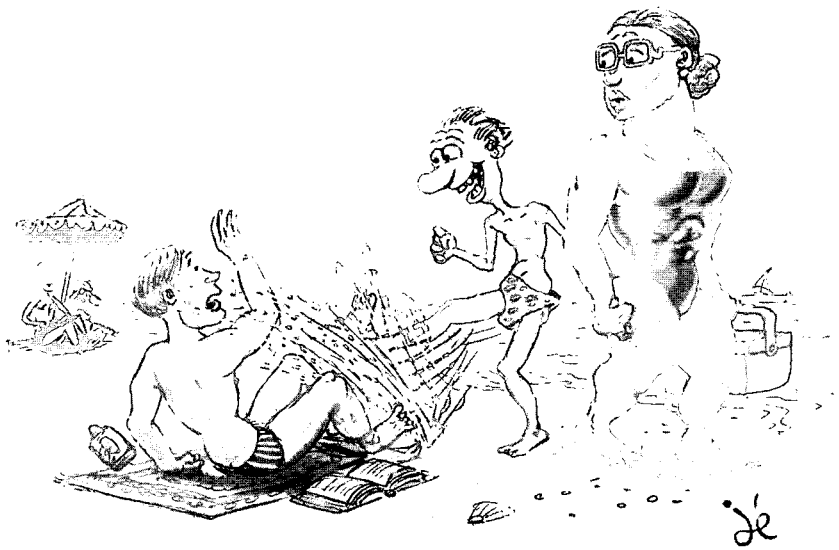

Cartoon by Charles Jaffé

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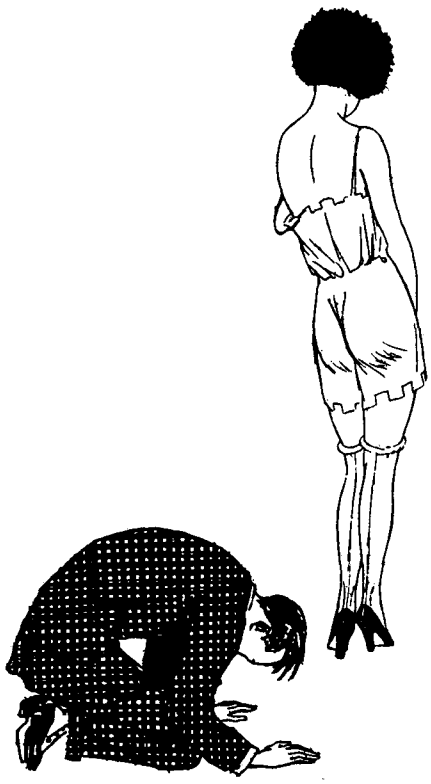
Why Didn't He Call?

Women who believe men are exploitive sexual opportunists should look in the mirror, admits *Kate Fillion*

Moral superiority isn't something that women are born with. We have to choose it, and this requires that we admit that we do have the capacity to exercise free will when it comes to sex, and that sometimes we make mistakes for which we bear sole responsibility.

I did not understand this when I was twenty-four years old. At the time I was in London, homesick and feeling guilty that I wasn't entirely enjoying living overseas. I was relieved when an old friend came to visit, but also felt it was necessary to prove to her that I was having the time of my life. So it was that on the first night of her visit, I dragged her to a black-tie party where I hardly knew anyone.

Within an hour I was standing alone at a window, watching her sail off in a cab with a handsome man, consumed by a potent mixture of jealousy, self-pity, and sanctimony. She had been in the country for less than twenty-four hours and had already abandoned me—for an attractive date. It didn't seem fair. When she returned to my flat the next day in the grip of a five-alarm pregnancy scare, however, my envy gave way to moral vanity. I would never get into such a mess, I thought, congratulating myself on my probity, although my virtue had been wholly untested the previous evening and I'd been rather upset about that at the time.



My friend was worried enough to want morning-after pills and lucky enough to find a sympathetic doctor who would prescribe them for a foreigner. But the remedy made her violently ill, so she lay in bed for two days, conquering nausea by telling herself that if she threw up the pills, she would most certainly need an abortion. I, meanwhile, fluffed her pillows and suggested, with what I imagined was tactful understatement, that maybe she would be a little more responsible from now on.

I was careful to the point of paranoia about contraception and high-minded enough to believe that I could teach her a thing or two. My method was Socratic: once it became clear that the man didn't have a condom, I asked, why did she go ahead and have sex? She fought down queasiness long enough to reply that the combination of his charm, her own sense of anonymity, and the foreign setting had intoxicated her past the brink of common sense, so that at the crucial moment, she had thought, What the hell. She was well aware, she said, that she'd been irresponsible, but....

That "but" hung in the air, eloquently suggestive. At the time, it had seemed worth it, my friend seemed to say; she had been hell-bent on rapture, had found some, and could not dishonor her desire or her body's memory by pretending that her pleasure had been entirely worthless. Her "but" and its implication of entitlement to purely physical pleasure—so greedy, so unabashed, so unfeminine—annoyed me, and I continued to press for a renunciation. Why did she have sex with a man who lived in London, a man she had only just met and would in all likelihood never see again?

She recognized this for the accusation it was and said, in the mildest tone possible, that I was hardly one to point fingers. "I was in love with every man I ever slept with!" I insisted, hotly denying that I had ever had "meaningless" sex. She was either too ill or too magnanimous to rattle off a list of names and ask me whether it was really possible—although the list was not

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so very long—that I had loved every one. She spared me that embarrassment, and at any rate already knew the answer long before I was prepared to admit it.

The truth of the matter is that I had a genius for convincing myself that I was in love after I had sex. The main difference between us was that I would have slept with the man but tottered off the next day in the grip of an obsession for which no morning-after pill has yet been devised. Tossing and turning in a handsome man's bed all night long was all the proof I would have needed to believe that I was in love, and this "love" would only have deepened by the time I returned home to begin the vigil, waiting for the phone to ring.

Like my friend, I barreled into sex with no-strings bravado, especially if he was reasonably attractive and noncommittal, in which case I saw him as a challenge. But my live-a-little attitude lasted only until daybreak, when it was replaced with Hallmark images of sunsets, secluded beaches, and eternal romance. I retroactively willed my heart to follow my body, and in the subsequent frenzy of insecurity—why hasn't he phoned? or, if he had phoned, why isn't he madly in love with me?—I forgot entirely the things I'd felt at the beginning of the encounter, which had nothing whatsoever to do with love.

In reality, I'd headed off to bed with a sense of high adventure. In the midst of a seduction, I had the thrilling conviction that I was inventing my own life and creating my own legend, and deluded myself into thinking I was liberated enough not to care what happened afterwards. Although hungry for admiration, I did not lack self-esteem; I had sex, not because I wanted love, but because I wanted power, and in the intensity of the sexual moment, believed that I had it.

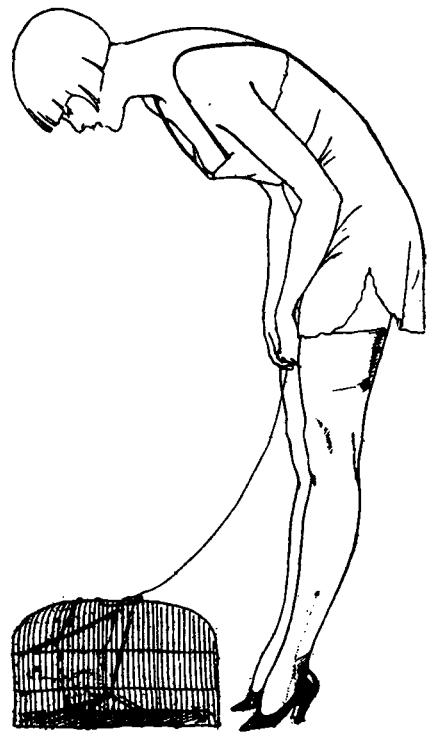
Afterwards, however, when the narcotic effects of desire had subsided, there was the mundane reality of a stranger's morning breath. I couldn't face what my desires looked like in the light of day and did not want to take responsibility for the places they had led me, so the eagerness with which I'd embraced my sexual power the previous night could only be matched by the alacrity with which I sought to deny its existence in the morning.

I accomplished this feat by looking to the man, instead of to myself, to figure out what I was doing in bed with him. I wanted to believe that he had caused my desire, as though my desire was not something I owned and certainly not something for which I bore any responsibility. Maintaining this fiction that he had created my desire—which was crucial not least because I was now concerned that he'd think less of me for hopping into bed with him so readily—meant that I had to endow him with mythic helpings of perception, intelligence, and character.

I rapidly grew enamored of this figment of my imagination and confused him with the flesh-and-blood version in the bed, and therefore was able to convince myself with relative ease that I was there because I was in love. Not only was I in love, but I was absolved of sin, guilt, or any blame for the fact that we had had sex.

The less I knew of the man, the easier it was to project all my fantasies, hopes and wishes onto him, and the more difficult it was to accept his refusal to likewise delude himself. I did not grasp that a man had a right to be alarmed if he went to sleep beside a woman who was talking and behaving like a free spirit, and awoke to find her prattling merrily about the future and clearing a space in his closet so she could install her own clothes. So, if he gently protested that he was not, in fact, in the market for a relationship, I was bewildered and saw it as an inexplicable about-face on his part.

After a few of these experiences, I began to believe—as did practically every woman I knew—that men were inscrutable sociopaths who feared strong, intelligent women. Many of us, however, were unwilling to give up while we still had some dignity to squander. Rather, convinced that these men secretly longed for us, we mounted campaigns to prove to them they had nothing to fear. Together, we'd rehearse what to say when we phoned them, how to convey a casual,



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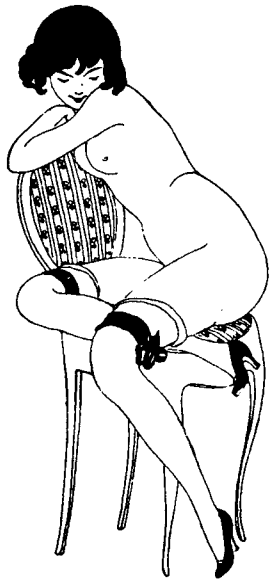
couldn't-care-less breeziness. He's afraid of commitment, we told each other and told ourselves, and came up with what seemed like a brilliant strategy: shanghai the man into a relationship by pretending that you yourself didn't want one. Of course, this particular piece of reverse psychology often backfired. Men took us at face value when we misrepresented ourselves as the kind of women who would make no claims on them, or alternatively, our intensity and mixed signals sent them running for cover.

On more than one occasion I slept with a man chiefly because someone else had told me that he liked me, so he seemed like a sure thing. Usually, though, I had so little interest in these men that I thought I was doing them a huge favor by letting them have their way with me. I was after a quick ego fix, and nothing seems more promising in this regard than having sex with a man when you're convinced that you are the best thing that ever happened to him. It did not occur to me that perhaps he wouldn't recognize that I was doing him a favor and might in fact view the interaction in terms of equality.

If he assumed that I'd slept with him because I really liked him, I found myself silently fuming at his presumption—me like him? Wasn't it the other way around?—while simultaneously trying to convince myself that I had slept with him because I was in love. There were two feelings to reconcile, one true—I never had much interest in this man and sleeping with him was probably a mistake—and one false: this is the man I once cared for deeply, twelve whole hours ago, which is why I went to bed with him. Sadly, the days of wine and roses are over. The only solution seemed to be screening my calls for months and slinking off in the other direction if I ran into him socially.

I hurt some thoroughly decent men with these antics, and anyone who believes that all men are callous commitment-phobes should look up a few of the ones who had the misfortune to be on the receiving end of my "favors." In retrospect, I am amazed that I continued to believe that I was a victim of



cold-blooded men. I failed to make the connection: I wielded my power against men in exactly the same way that I accused men of using their power against me. On balance, I have to say I treated men worse than they treated me; there were some not-so-nice ones who hurt me badly, but I colluded in my own victimization by playing the game of convincing myself I was in love because I'd had sex. I handed my heart over to them before they'd earned it, and then kept hanging on, no matter what they did, because I was "in love."

My relationships with men were not, however, always the stuff of bad farce. I did meet men, date them, decide I liked them, and then have sex with them, in that order, applauding myself for waiting. But "waiting" is generally understood as delaying sex until the third or fourth date, or at most, the third or fourth week. I still didn't know what the man would be like when he wasn't on his best behavior or what his values were or whether he'd be supportive of my career or any of the other things that were crucial to the success of the relationship.

The truth is that after a few dinners, a movie, and some witty repartee, sex is either recreation or an act of faith. Sometimes I was lucky and things worked out. Sometimes, however, I stayed in these relationships much longer than I should have precisely because I had created a compelling myth for myself about having been in love from the start, which was why I'd had sex.

Thus, I did get real power from sex, though the power to cause myself emotional pain and to hurt men was not what I had sought. I was unaware that being profligate with my heart to excuse the fact that I'd been profligate with my body made matters much worse. It took me years to figure out that sexual responsibility requires taking emotional as well as contraceptive precautions—and also requires treating men like human beings who have feelings. Because I couldn't be honest with myself about the shape of my own desires and the consequences of my own behavior, I ascribed more power to the men I had sex with than they ever had, and certainly far more than most of them wanted. ◆

From Lip Service *by Kate Fillion*
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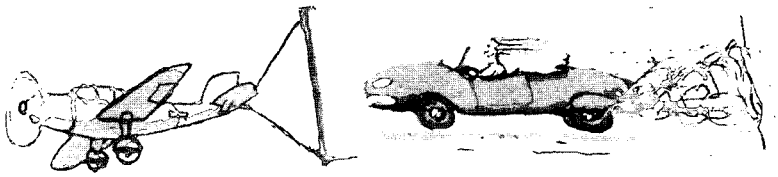
What Does Woman Want?



Christina Hoff Sommers, Helen Gurley Brown, Midge Decter and others answer the question that stumped Freud

If Freud complained at the beginning of this century that woman's nature remained a "dark continent," one glance at the hundreds of volumes filling the "women" section of bookstores indicates the subject of our nature is now paved over by strip malls and flashing neon lights. But we still seem no closer to answering his famous question. Is there an answer at all? TWQ consulted a number of experts—from the female scribes who think about it all the time to those in professions who are confronted with demanding women everyday: a celebrity hairdresser, a prominent divorce lawyer, a pollster. Here are their answers. Hope it helps. ~Danielle Crittenden

CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS
Author, Philosophy Professor

Contemporary feminist leaders and theorists never tire of telling women what they should and should not want. For example, they regard women who like feminine roles and traditional families as suffering from "false consciousness." They learned this hectoring style of feminism from Simone de Beauvoir. Discussing the woman "who chooses to take care of her children full time," Beauvoir writes: "[W]e don't believe that any woman should have this choice. No woman should be authorized to stay at home to raise her children. Society should be totally different. Women should not have that choice, precisely because if there is such a choice, too many women will make that one."

Contrast Beauvoir's authoritarian arrogance with the democratic respect shown to women by conservative feminist Clare Boothe Luce. Luce talks unabashedly about "women's nature," but she is careful to say that women's nature can only be fully known in conditions of freedom and opportunity: "It is time to leave the question of the role of women in society up to Mother Nature—a difficult lady to fool. You have only to give women the same opportunities as men, and you will soon find out what is or is not in their nature. What is in women's nature to do they will do, and you won't be able to stop them. But you will also find, and so will they, that what is not in their nature, even if they are given every opportunity, they will not do, and you won't be able to make them do it."

How refreshing Luce's attitude is compared to the matronizing admonitions of the gender warriors who keep telling us that our desires and preferences are "socially constructed," not in our own interests, and will have to be changed.

What do we want? Well now that we have our freedom and opportunities, wait and see! All you can bet on is that the gender feminists will find it unworthy, inauthentic, incorrect, and unacceptable.

MONA CHAREN
Syndicated Columnist

Well, for one thing, meaning no disrespect to the editor of this fine journal, this woman wants to be treated as an individual, not as a group member, and accordingly finds it odd to be asked what half the human race wants. Surely we would find it peculiar to ask "What do Italians want?" or "What do Minnesotans want?"

As for myself, the only woman on whose behalf I speak with absolute authority, I am a world-class wanter.

I want a return to fault in divorce actions. I want parents who abuse

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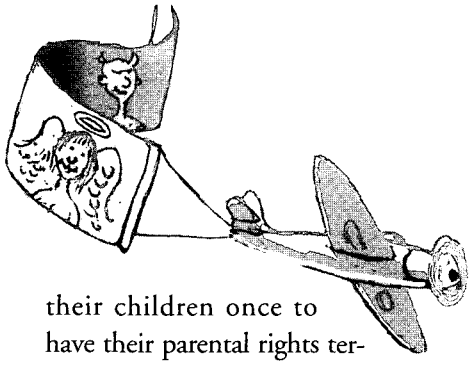

their children once to have their parental rights terminated. I want Bob Dole to fire Sheila Burke. And I want some American politician, of either sex, to approach the splendor of Margaret Thatcher.

More wants available upon request.

HELEN GURLEY BROWN
Editor-in-chief, Cosmopolitan

I HAVE BEEN saying for a hundred years that women want what men want. We want to be loved, appreciated, cherished, taken seriously, celebrated in our triumphs, consoled in our defeats, and, if we can fit it in, a lovely sex life! Ever since I was in group therapy—half women/half men—thirty-five years old, I began to formulate the idea that men and women are more alike than different emotionally. Anatomically we are different *enough* to create children and lots of lovely moments in bed. There are good women and bad women and the same goes for the other sex—everybody didn't get it totally right on either side *all* of the time...in some cases, hardly *any* of the time!

JOHN CROUCH
Divorce Lawyer

SERIAL MONOGAMY AND lots of money. Seriously, women of course want financial security—a lot of our clients were married in countries, or in decades, where divorce was not considered a socially acceptable option, and now they just want what they expected when they got married. But some women have higher aspirations. An irresponsible man just wants hassle-free sexual freedom, but a woman can try for a husband-funded boy-harem, or can fight for her children's right not to have men involved in their lives. But some of our clients have simpler needs: they just want their man to bathe, or (in one case) to stop stealing the shower curtain, or to be more sincere and expressive in showing his love for the dogs. There are plenty of women and men who want whatever they can get away with, but women are allowed to be a bit more imaginative in their demands.

MIDGE DECTER
Author

THE GREAT YIDDISH humorist Sholom Aleichem once wrote: "Wherein is a man like a shoemaker? A shoemaker lives and lives and lives until he dies, and so does a man."

My answer to your question is: Wherein is a woman like a shopgirl? A shopgirl wants and wants and wants—a prince; the boy next door; total freedom; many children; to be beautiful; that it should not matter how she looks; to live long; to be forever young; to be admired for her accomplishments; to have nothing expected of her; in short, what every human being wants, i.e., to have without paying. The real problem is, how does a woman go about learning that that is impossible?

LAURA INGRAHAM
Political Commentator

WOMEN WANT TO be left alone by people asking them what women feel, want, need, etc. Most women don't live their lives according to self-help or personality quizzes that attempt to measure such things. Other than that, I suspect that women want to find a soul mate with whom they can raise children. Anything more than that is icing on the cake—a fact that unfortunately many women don't realize until it's too late.

OLIVIA VLAHOS
Anthropologist

NOT ALWAYS WHAT is expected. Counter-culture communes of the sixties set out to give women what they said they wanted: interchangeability with men. The sexes would cross-dress, swap jobs, and be happy. Unaccountably, women preferred to cook, clean, and tend babies than to wrangle with cars or pound nails. Bewildered male communards finally conceded that job choices by sex might be different. But jobs were equal. Right?

Sex equity was also a stated goal of the kibbutz movement in Israel. And yet by 1975 scholars found more job polarization by sex on the kibbutz than in society at large. Urged by men to participate in political and security decisions, kibbutz women flocked instead to art and culture committees. Freed by nurses and teachers from burdensome child care, women said no thanks, we'd rather do it ourselves.

Was biology destiny after all? Merely statistical probability, said anthropologist Lionel Tiger. In the kibbutz, however, probability reigned. Those few women who shared male concerns and activities were labeled "sports" by their sisters.

In America it is the "sports" who reign; the "sports" who have captured cachet, dominated the media, co-opted the courts. They have won the right to dictate what women should want: the workplace, the career path, the single-

Drawings by Charles Jaffé

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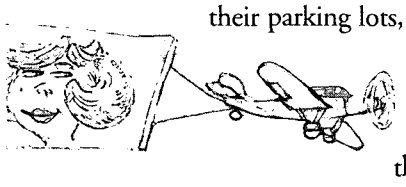
minded quest, not for parity, but for power. And, oh yes, someone at home to do the wash and mind Baby.

Ordinary women murmur assent but fail to follow through. They float in and out of the workplace according to their children's needs and the family purse. They reconfigure careers so as to be more often at home. They tell pollsters (furtively, of course) they'd rather stay home altogether. Too bad they must apologize for wanting what they want and doing what they do.

KELLYANNE FITZPATRICK
Pollster and Political Commentator

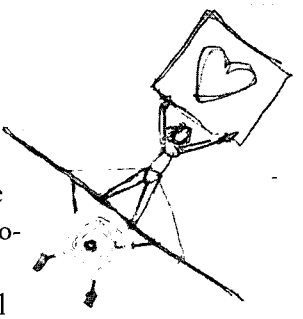
Women are tired of reading headlines which tell them that they care about abortion and affirmative action while they are stuck raising their children alone in high-crime neighborhoods and shouldering the weight of huge tax burdens. Women want Bob and Elizabeth Dole to give them a positive reason to vote Republican this year since they already have a number of reasons to vote against Bill and Hillary Clinton. For instance, our polling data shows that while women are concerned about crime, what is paramount to them is personal safety. They are less focused on solutions to crime in general like the death penalty than they are about seeing more police on their local streets, better lighting in their parking lots, and receiving assurance that their attackers will serve their full terms in prison. Women also want to see an agenda that speaks to the middle-class taxpayer, the American family, and, particularly, the small-business owner. Nearly eight million women now own small businesses and want relief from taxes and regulations. Even though Bill Clinton is winning the ballot test in polls, Bob Dole still has an advantage among women, for character, leadership, and trustworthiness.



WENDY SHALIT
Senior, Williams College

A lifetime supply of Diet Coke? There may be a danger here in extrapolating too much from one's own experience. I am also wary because flattering oneself that one knows "what woman wants" has a funny way of making the fulfillment of these wants unlikely. For if "what woman wants" is really so easily discernible, then those women who do not, in fact, want what you determine, are simply deluding themselves and may need a little push. A number of people have had very specific ideas about what women want, ideas which eventually proved quite dangerous to a certain set of wants associated with motherhood. How can women become the self-actualized lawyers we know they really want to be if they persist in wasting time with their kids? Well then let's call pregnancy "deformation," as Shulamith Firestone did, and mother-infant bonding "a scientific fiction," as does Diane Eyer. Still stubbornly want to stay home with your kids? That makes you a "mental defective," according to Ann Dally.

Why did this happen? Part of it may have to do with what Hayek called "the Fatal Conceit"—the fallacy that if we could just somehow garner enough information about people's wants, then we could plan the perfect society. But there may be a more important reason why we have not yet solved what German social theorist August Bebel called the "woman question": the feminine really does defy rational explanation. Despite conventional wisdom's easy dismissal of feminine mystery as phony "mystique" invented to subordinate women, it may be that what women want cannot truly be expressed in words. The special instinct that led Tolstoy's Kitty to know when her Mitia was crying, that unique bond that Levin couldn't quite understand, is necessarily hidden from science.



So perhaps part of what women want these days is to be able to rescue their desires from the political sphere—for everyone to stop fretting so much over what they want. Kant famously said that "women don't give their secret away," and my feminine intuition tells me that a good dose of reticence about the "woman question" might do far more for women than "solving" it, as if womanhood were a disease to be cured.

ANNE ROCHE MUGGERIDGE
Author

What does woman want? you ask. So asks Chaucer in "The Wife of Bath's Tale": "A lusty bacheler" at King Arthur's Court has raped a maiden and is to die for it. Queen Guinevere, who has a soft spot for a lusty bachelor, begs Arthur for the knight's life, which he grants her. She lets the knight live on condition that he find out "What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren." After a long and fruitless search, he meets a poor, ugly, old woman who gives him the answer, thus saving his life, but in return makes him promise to do whatever she demands. The answer is:

"Wommen desiren have sovereyne-

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tee, As wel over hir housbond, as hir love, And for to been in maistrie hym above."

Once the knight is safe, the old hag keeps him to his promise and demands that he marry her. On their wedding night, he unchivalrously bewails his lot. She chides him for not being a true gentleman and makes him see himself for what he is—a cad and a debaucher. He humbly submits to her wiser understanding. Already, she has begun to remake him. Having gained sovereynetee over him, she renounces it, leaving him to decide whether or not he wants her to become young and beautiful. He replies:

"My lady and my love, and wyf so deere, I put me in youre wise governance; Cheseth youre self which may be moost plesance, and moost honour to yow and me also.... For as yow liketh, it suffiseth me."

Their love is now reciprocal. "And thus they lyve unto hir lyves ende in parfit joye...."

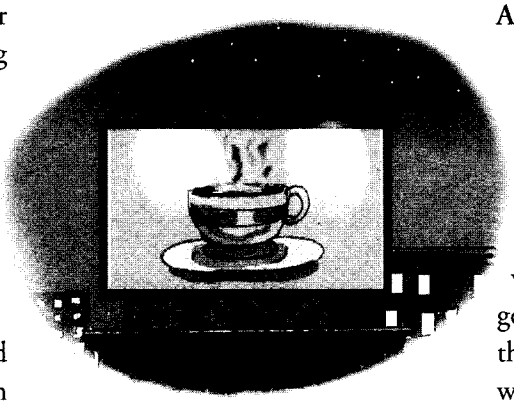
This is the story of every happy marriage.

AMITY SHLAES

Editorialist, the Wall Street Journal

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY. ONE of the ironies of the past thirty years is that we sometimes used the wrong tools to go after that opportunity. The courts and Congress may have been central to obtaining change for women in the early years of feminism; too often now they fail to foster opportunity for women (women's wages, for instance, did not rise relative to men's following the passage of the 1963 Equal Pay Act). Yet nowadays we continue the push—in Congress and the courtroom—for legal requirements of equal pay and mandated benefits. The 1990s seem to have been devoted to making marginal improvements to the working woman's condition—campaigns for parental leave, flex-time, child credits, and even the forty-eight-hour postnatal stay.

Most of these fiddling efforts, however, simply reflect a new paternalism. Women today are as dependent upon the whim of regulators and judges as they were formerly on the whim of the village priest or rabbi. And this in an era when we have seen that the best career for a woman is to become her own boss! Why not then take the energy that goes into fighting for various—and often demeaning—"protections" and use it toward lifting regulation and lowering the capital gains tax? When I have my own business, I may determine the length of my maternity leave.



Questions of focus aside, now should prove a time of enormous economic opportunity for women. Despite the histrionics over widening wage gaps, we can see, in fact, that the male-female wage gap is narrowing. Economist June O'Neill, to whose research on women and the economy we are indebted, notes that before 1980—and long after legislative efforts to make things more equal—women seemed stuck at a wage that was sixty percent of men's. The ratio even seemed to have approval from high authority. In Leviticus, God instructed Moses to tell the Israelites that women, for purposes of tithing, were worth thirty shekels and men fifty—a ratio of sixty percent. Yet the 1980s proved that that relationship was hardly set in stone. Throughout the decade the gap narrowed, and by 1993 women earned seventy-seven percent of men's wages. To get to one hundred percent, women need what men need: more room to shape their lives.

DENNIS CAMPEAU

Hairdresser

ALWAYS, ALWAYS THE question posed to me is, "And will I look young?" I've never met a woman who actually asked for something that made her look old—or at least what she thinks will make her look old. The mistake some women make in wanting to look young are those who get stuck in a rut and never change their hair after the time in their life when they felt the most beautiful and desirable, usually around the age of thirty-five. Those are the women who still wear beehives at seventy, or they still wear stilettos and tights. A woman whose beauty lasts a long time is always a woman who understands her own flaws and her own qualities. Great beauties like Audrey Hepburn and Jackie Onassis knew their own style, and when you look at pictures of them at any period of their life they never look ugly or ridiculous. They took the fashion of their period, infused it, and kept it flattering to them. And they stayed within a specific look: always easy, one that never needed fussing, their clothes fitting precisely and exactly. Because an elegant woman should never fuss with her hair or her clothes. It should all look effortless. Such a woman will always get what she wants. ◆

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The Token Man

Hotel of Savages

David Brooks reveals what happens when men are left alone with minibars and expense accounts

At a time when honeymoon couples spent their wedding nights at Niagara Falls, a wit remarked that seeing the falls themselves was the second biggest disappointment of a woman's life. Men have it rougher. Unable to learn from our mistakes, we experience our biggest disappointment over and over again.

It's the business trip. When you are booking your flight and choosing the hotel, you envision the trip as a golden respite—a break from waking up at six with the kids and limiting your attention span to that of a two-year-old. My business trips can sometimes take me to glamorous locales—London, Paris, Jerusalem—and I excitedly tack on a day for sightseeing. And I always curse myself afterwards. These extra days are melancholy affairs (a claim my wife has trouble accepting).

The first day of a trip is taken up entirely by guilt. (To calculate how long a modern man will feel guilty for leaving his kids, take the amount of time the kid actually notices his absence and multiply by 123).

And then things get ugly. The noblest in a man's nature is connected to the basest. So when you have a group of men who suddenly find themselves alone—who miss the intimacies of family life; who are absent from the civilizing influence of wives and the responsibilities of children; and who suddenly realize that all the freedoms of bachelorhood are open to them, with an expense account to boot—well, what you get is a hotel full of savages.

Wives needn't worry, though. Unless you are married to a Japanese businessman, you can be absolutely certain that these longings will come to nothing. The spectacle is more pathetic than adulterous. Normal men are transformed into frat boys, leering at waitresses, swinging through lobbies, drooling in the elevator, and failing to realize that when a young woman sees a man strutting around a sun deck with a belly that looks like it contains a planetarium, her thoughts are not lubricious ones.

The traveling man suffering from this malady begins in his room by devouring the foil bags of peanuts left over from the flight. Then, stripping off his clothes, he calls the office from the bathroom phone so he can admire his form and slap his belly as he issues instructions to his associates. After swallowing a few Toblerone bars from the minibar, he decides, in his elemental frame of mind, that he needs a workout. In shorts and wing-tips he makes his way to the hotel health club. Unfortunately, the kidney-shaped pool is only fifteen feet long and to lose the needed forty pounds will take 4,534,875 laps. After three lengths he is winded and heads back self-satisfied for a shower and shave.

If his wife were there she would detect that he had mistaken the little bottle of hotel-provided bath oil for cologne. She would also let him know that his conservative business suits cannot be made sexy, no matter how high he folds up the lapels. But looking like Alan Greenspan trying to impersonate Engelbert Humperdinck, he proceeds down to the hotel bar. If he happens to brush against a woman at this point he will spontaneously combust.

Down at the cocktail bar, he orders a drink, looks up at the TV, and casts a lecherous eye at the female correspondents of "Business Week in Review." He is surrounded by men in the same feverish mood as himself. They are sending off vapors that have a depleting effect on the ozone layer. Savvy women who venture out of their rooms this evening will be dressed like agents from the Internal Revenue Service.

Dinner—steak and potatoes (the latter in the form of vodka)—will be spent alone at the nearest revolving restaurant. His mood is growing darker, though his attention is still riveted by what academics would call "gender topics." The waitresses are by now cowering behind the ice machines. Any vixen who remains ripe for his companionship will find him, fifteen minutes hence, passed out seductively under one of the urinals.

The next day, when he lands at the airport and sees his wife and kids waiting for him, he is again the happiest of creatures, exactly the sort of devoted family man that makes this country great. ◆

David Brooks is a senior editor of the Weekly Standard.

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Legal But Not Safe

Roe v. Wade was supposed to put an end to abortion horror stories. It hasn't, reports *Candace C. Crandall*

A week before last Christmas, Carolina Gutierrez had an abortion at the Maber Medical Center, a storefront women's clinic in Miami's Little Havana. She returned home staggering, in severe pain. A few hours later, when she telephoned the clinic seeking help, staff members hung up on her. Later more frantic phone calls reached only an answering machine. No one called her back. Two days later, Gutierrez was rushed by ambulance to Jackson Memorial Hospital. According to reports in the *Miami Herald*, she was suffering septic shock. Her uterus was perforated in two places; a blood infection was spreading rapidly throughout her body. Doctors worked for six weeks to save her life, administering massive doses of antibiotics and finally, with her feet turning black, amputating both of her legs in a futile attempt to stop worsening gangrene. Gutierrez died on February 5. She was just twenty-one years old.

Into the gulf that separates pro-life and pro-choice activists, the lives of women like Gutierrez fall without making a sound. Feminists refer to abortion as a "vital health service," label attempts to regulate it as "threats to women's safety," and focus their efforts on the fight over parental notification and attempts to curtail the so-called partial-birth procedure. Most in the religious right lament only the tragic loss of unborn children. But the most compelling issue is swept aside: *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling that legalized abortion nationwide, was supposed to put an end to abortion horror stories like Gutierrez's. But it hasn't. Women are dying from abortion. And they are dying not because of good doctors making honest mistakes but because of bad doctors taking calculated risks.

Just how much bad medicine is being glossed over in the name of choice? "A lot," according to Warren Hern, a nationally known specialist in abortion and author of *Abortion Practice*, the nation's most widely used textbook on the subject. Epidemiologists with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will say only that they cannot be certain that all abortion-related deaths are being reported. But today, anyone can sit down at a computer—as I did recently—and pull up hundreds of newspaper accounts of death, injury, and fraud at walk-in abortion clinics across the country: in Atlanta, Houston, New York, Boston, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, Washington, D.C.

These are not the pristine establishments where Radcliffe girls might go for a weekend abortion. These are

Drawing by Yuri Kolyadenko

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the clinics that advertise in Spanish-language newspapers and neighborhood weeklies, pay kickbacks to sleazy phone referral services, and lure women through the doorway with names that echo the political lingua franca—"choice," and "reproductive health." These are the nightmarish abortion mills where black and Hispanic women are dying at a rate of two-and-a-half times that of white women; where doctors stop midway through a procedure to shake down patients for more cash and turn them out into the street bleeding if they can't pay up; where staff members seldom change the bloody sheets on the beds; where patients scream through their abortions with no anesthesia because administering painkillers is costly and risky, and in an assembly line operation that rushes through as many as ninety women a day, there just isn't any time.

Most abortion providers, one assumes, are reasonably competent, as they were even before 1973, when Planned Parenthood estimated that nine out of ten illegal abortions were being performed by qualified physicians. But prior to *Roe v. Wade*, the fact that these doctors were often breaking the law also kept the numbers of abortions low —as few as 200,000 by some estimates —and effectively discouraged most from taking unnecessary risks with their patients. Legalization removed these constraints. An unscrupulous abortion doctor could simply hang out his shingle, confident that he would be shielded by abortion rights rhetoric that uniformly proclaims him a hero, even if his motives are not compassion but greed.

As early as 1971, a year after the New York state legislature legalized abortion, Susan Edmiston noted with alarm in the *New York Times* magazine that the city's high-profit, high-volume abortion industry had grown up largely uncontrolled, and that state health department officials had failed to supervise the clinics, establish accurate data collection, or take any action on the numerous medical complaints that were already coming in. Reporters were turning up similar problems in Los Angeles and the District of Columbia.

Yet warnings like this were repeatedly ignored. In 1974, the *Detroit Free Press* found unsafe, unlicensed abortion clinics proliferating in the Detroit area. In 1978, a five-month investigation by the *Chicago Sun-Times* uncovered dangerous medical practices at abortion clinics along Chicago's Michigan Avenue, including abortions routinely performed on women who were not pregnant. In 1991, the *New York Times* reported "filth" and "butchery" at dozens of shabby, unlicensed abortion mills tucked away behind storefronts or—to evade state regulators—operating out of ordinary-looking doctors' offices, often in poor neighborhoods. Since then, three gruesome New York abortion cases have made national headlines.

How much serious injury stems from abortion isn't known. There are no federal agencies tracking these numbers; overall complication rates and long-term health risks from abortion remain in the realm of best guess. Suspected abortion deaths reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—some five hundred and fifty between 1972 and 1990—have remained low in relation to the total number of procedures—about twenty-seven million over the same period.

But how reliable are these figures? CDC epidemiologists themselves have expressed doubts. According to Dr. Clarice Green, who handles the CDC's abortion morbidity and mortality data, state health agencies are not required by law to report abortion deaths to the CDC; indeed, since *Roe v. Wade* fewer death reports have come through state agencies. In 1972, seventy-seven percent of the reports of suspected abortion-related deaths came from state health department vital records. By 1987, the last year for which source information is available, that figure had dropped to sixty percent. To estimate death rates then, the CDC has to rely on alternative sources: maternal mortality committees, surveys, private citizens (including malpractice suits), health care providers, medical examiner reports, even newspaper articles. This is clearly inadequate. Preliminary CDC data for 1991 and 1992, for example, lists only two abortion-related deaths, one for each year. Anti-abortion groups, however, can provide death certificates and autopsy reports showing at least twenty abortion-related deaths over that same period.

And numbers alone don't give a complete picture. CDC officials have cited, in a paper published in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* (November 1994), a "growing concern" that doctors attempting to dodge lawsuits are falsifying data on death certificates, a practice that could be the cause of a noticeable delay in classifying abortion-related deaths.

Warren Hern, who is also director of a Colorado abortion clinic, puts much of the blame for the dangerous conditions at some clinics on the feminist movement, commenting that activists

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have "denied for twenty-five years that pregnancy is a medical condition or that abortion is a surgical procedure." An expert witness in numerous abortion malpractice trials over the last twenty years, Hern states frankly that many abortion-related deaths and injuries would not have occurred had the doctor adhered to the fundamental principles of surgery. "It's not a sin to have a complication," Hern told the *New York Times* last year, "but it is a sin if you haven't tried to prevent it. And it's a very serious sin if you abandon it."

Hern estimates that at least five to ten percent of all first trimester abortions are incomplete: that is, some fetal or placental tissue is left in the uterus, where it can lead to infection if it is not expelled. Serious infection and other potentially life-threatening complications—hemorrhage, uterine perforations, embolism, missed tubal pregnancies, and reactions from improperly administered anaesthesia—have occurred in some 250,000 women undergoing legal abortion since 1972, according to the CDC. Yet abortion providers and abortion rights activists resist health regulation that would require emergency care equipment and better trained clinic personnel in order to keep abortion costs low—an important consideration in clinics that do much of their business on a cash basis.

A doctor who establishes an abortion clinic in his office can avoid having to report to state health officials the number of abortions he performs and at what point in the pregnancies they occurred. In some states, he is not required to have admitting privileges at a hospital, provide an ambulance service in case of emergency, or even to carry malpractice insurance. Performing abortions in a clinic or his office also isolates him from the medical community; other doctors won't see his work unless a patient shows up in a hospital emergency room.

"This is not about medicine," says Hern, "this is about economics and ideology." If a doctor is not required to provide adequate health and safety measures, he may weigh the costs of such measures against the chance that his patient ends up with a bad outcome. Further, state licensing boards have been notoriously reluctant to discipline doctors, even when confronted with overwhelming evidence of the most egregious negligence and incompetence. A Harvard study, published in 1991 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, found that for all types of medical malpractice in New York State in 1984, there was a huge disparity between the number of patients who had suffered serious injury that year and the number of doctors disciplined. In fact, a doctor's risk of actually losing his state medical license for injuring a patient was one in three thousand. Other studies have reached similar conclusions.

If a doctor does lose his license, he simply moves to another state and sets up shop again. In September 1994, three months after the murder of an abortion doctor at the Pensacola Ladies Center, Florida health officials were publicly embarrassed by Associated Press reports that two doctors at the same clinic, listed in good standing with the Florida Board of Medicine, had lengthy records of medical and ethical violations. One doctor, Stephen Chase Brigham, had had his medical license suspended in New York and Georgia, and restricted in New Jersey and California; in Pennsylvania, he'd "retired" from medicine under an agreement with state prosecutors.

The failure of state licensing boards to effectively put such doctors out of business eventually leaves it up to law enforcement officials. Three years ago, Dr. David Benjamin's reckless indifference to human life left Guadalupe Negron, a 33-year-old mother of three, sitting on his operating table covered in her own vomit, watching her life bleed out of her. Benjamin, who was convicted of second-degree murder, had scores of complaints on file and had been barred from two hospitals for gross negligence before the New York state health department finally revoked his license, just two weeks before Negron's death. Health department officials permitted him to continue practising while the decision was under appeal.

State medical investigators in California admitted that they had received numerous complaints about an unlicensed Santa Ana abortion clinic run by Alicia Hanna, including reports that she was rinsing and reusing disposable plastic syringes, employing unqualified staff, and had bungled several abortions. Even so, the decision to investigate was still pending when Hanna was arrested in 1993 for murder in the abortion death of clinic patient Angela Sanchez. Hanna, who performed abortions despite having no medical training, was caught loading Sanchez's body into the trunk of her car, reportedly planning to dump it in Tijuana, Mexico. She was sentenced to sixteen-years-to-life in prison.

Last December, the Federal Bureau of Investigation began looking into unsavory practices at a chain of Boston abortion clinics after allegations surfaced that clinic staff were falsifying ultrasound tests, convincing women that their pregnancies were farther

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along than they thought, in order to charge them the higher cost for late-term abortions. The *Boston Globe* noted that the physician owning the clinics had been barred from five Boston-area hospitals and had been ordered to seek psychological counseling by the licensing board for putting his mouth on a patient's breast.

When abortion providers do sloppy work and professional standards are not enforced, civil courts are the only recourse for the victims of poor quality care. Women or their families have sued abortion doctors, frequently winning multimillion dollar judgments. But bringing these cases to court can put a woman's life under a microscope, something that would incite feminist outrage if a defense attorney tried that tactic in a rape trial.

And when lawsuits do come to court, pro-choice activists and even members of the press tend to dismiss the plaintiffs as part of some pro-life conspiracy. To be frank, those of us who sympathize with the abortion rights movement have repeated "keep abortion safe" so many times that we have ceased to question whether or not it *is* safe. Journalists who report an abortion malpractice case—or even uncover large-scale injury and fraud—usually see it as a local problem, an embarrassing aberration from the norm. When a St. Louis abortion doctor was ordered in 1992 to pay $25 million to the family of a woman who died after getting a toxic dose of lidocaine, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* held forth in an editorial that it was "unfortunate" that the malpractice case and the doctor's numerous other botched abortions—at least three of which had required emergency surgery and hospitalization—might be used by anti-abortion activists as "propaganda" in their crusade to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

Propaganda or not, some anti-abortion groups have stepped up efforts to bring more of these cases to trial, a prospect that, according to a reporter who covers this issue for the American Medical Association, has the abortion industry "terrified." One group, Life Dynamics, Inc., claims it is now assisting in nearly ninety abortion malpractice cases—twice the number it reported eighteen months ago—and that it has established a network of some six hundred lawyers nationwide to handle other cases.

The response from abortion rights activists, predictably, has been denial and hysteria. Pamela Maraldo, until recently president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, calls abortion malpractice suits "bogus," evidence of "extremism," and an "irresponsible abuse of our court system by zealots who seek to intimidate doctors and control women's lives." Maraldo and other abortion rights activists imply that for newspapers to publicize such cases increases the risk that abortion doctors will be murdered by pro-life fanatics.

Besides, according to a popular pro-choice refrain, the only women likely to sue are those who have abortions despite being philosophically opposed to the procedure. A spokesman for the National Abortion Federation refers to these women as "a very worrisome subset of our patients."

Actually, a stronger argument can be made that women uncommitted to the cause have traditionally been the least likely to sue. Abortion still carries a social stigma in most parts of the country. Many of those most vulnerable to ill-treatment by predatory doctors are poor, uneducated, and don't speak English. They don't know how to find a good clinic, how to evaluate the quality of their medical care, or how to file a complaint if a doctor's negligence results in serious injury.

Often it is only when a doctor finally bungles a case so badly that it makes headlines, that these women learn they have some recourse for their pain and suffering. When Dr. Abu Hayat turned up on network news in 1991, after a failed third-trimester abortion left an infant alive but with a severed arm, more than thirty of Hayat's former patients came forward with complaints, including one family that demanded an investigation of a woman's death at Hayat's New York clinic.

Feminist claims to the contrary, abortion doctors are not all heroes, though some of them do appear to have a mission. Dr. Edward C. Allred, founder of a California-based corporation that now operates nearly fifty abortion clinics and hospitals across the country, was quite matter-of-fact about his mission when talking to a reporter with the *San Diego Union*: "Population control is too important to be stopped by some right-wing, pro-life types. Take the new influx of Hispanic immigrants. Their lack of respect for democracy and social order is frightening. I hope I can do something to stop that tide. I'd set up a clinic in Mexico for free if I could. Maybe one in Calexico would help."

His views on welfare were equally revealing: "The Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program is the worst boondoggle ever created. When a sullen black woman of seventeen or eighteen can decide to have a baby and get welfare and food stamps and become a burden to all of us, it's time

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to stop." Allred's clinics are touted for their cleanliness and their efficiency. Allred himself boasts of perfecting the five minute abortion by eliminating "needless patient/physician contact" and of personally performing 1,800 abortions a month, working from seven in the morning to midnight. According to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, eight women have died at these clinics; hundreds of others have filed malpractice suits.

New federal laws were promptly put in place when anti-abortion lunatics shot up two abortion clinics in Florida in 1994. Congress also responded quickly with hearings when pro-choice activists complained that phony clinics were selling women on adoption instead of abortion. Yet there has been no federal action on abortion malpractice, despite the dismaying number of cases uncovered by reporters over the years. Officials at state health agencies and medical licensing boards have failed to protect the public.

Demands by pathologists, emergency care physicians, and others for tighter standards are repeatedly dismissed as something best left to the abortion industry itself, though in the current political climate expecting this profession to effectively police its own ranks seems incredibly naive. Abortion care standards established by the National Abortion Federation have been dismissed by critics, including Warren Hern who helped write them, as "cosmetic" and "meaningless." Hern, who remains active with the NAF, complains that the organization has never seriously pursued a program to implement abortion-care standards and evaluate member doctors and clinics. But in truth, what he envisions would be difficult to achieve. Without any authority to issue credentials, all the NAF can really do is drop bad doctors from its membership roster.

Abortion mill brutalities continue to occur because we have allowed politics to distort what should be a public health issue. Politicians and state health agencies make the claim that abortion is safe without providing the responsible oversight that would make it so. This is mindless. We need to set aside politics and inform women of possible complications and long-term health risks. We need to put in place a data-gathering system that can reliably track abortion mortality and injury, and establish—and enforce—medical care standards that ensure a reasonably safe outcome. We also need to streamline the disciplinary process for physicians, ensuring that doctors who put cash-flow considerations ahead of a woman's suffering are subjected to speedy hearings and licensing decisions, and put out of business permanently.

And feminists need to be honest with themselves. To downplay blatant cases of medical incompetence and deliberate disregard for human life leaves them open to charges that they are not acting in the best interests of women—indeed that their often professed concern for women in crisis pregnancies, particularly poor women, is a sham. Abortion malpractice is a national scandal. Without taking steps to resolve it, we will continue as we have for more than twenty years, whistling through a graveyard of women like Carolina Gutierrez, for whom the only consolation was that their abortions were legal. ◆

Candace C. Crandall, former communications director at the Center for Strategic & International Studies in Washington, writes frequently on health and environmental issues.

Mommy Still Looks Good

The results of the much heralded NICHD study on daycare are at best entirely premature and at worst downright worthless, writes ***Mark Genuis***

How often does a newspaper get to report a story certain to delight its readers? The editors of the *Wall Street Journal* on a day that the market sets a new record; the editors of the *Anchorage Daily News* when they print evidence that sunshine can cause skin cancer; the editors at *Le Figaro* when American scientists are forced to admit that red wine is healthy—these are happy journalists. But probably none of them were quite

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so happy as the editors of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* on April 20, when a team of researchers funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD] released a study purporting to prove the harmlessness of daycare.

Over the past decade, an accumulating pile of evidence has lent support to the fear that working mothers can inflict real harm on their infant children by placing them in someone else's care, and especially in a daycare center. Very understandably, those women, the daycare industry, and the many ideological advocates of nonparental care have been reluctant to accept this evidence. All of these people must have read their Sunday papers on April 21 with real enthusiasm. And millions of other Americans were able to enjoy the same pleasurable release from guilt over the next week, when *USA Today*, the television networks, and hundreds of local news sources rebroadcast the good news to their grateful audiences.

The relief, though, is likely to prove only temporary. For the findings of the NICHD study are at best entirely premature and at worst downright worthless.

The experts who have worried about the effects of daycare have worried, principally, that too much separation from the mother in the first year of life can lead to emotional troubles later on. But the study unveiled this April only tracked children up to the age of fifteen months—years before the damage (if any) done by daycare is expected to show up. How will these kids be doing at age five? Ten? Fifteen? As adults? Those are the important questions, and they remain unanswered.

Worse, the NICHD team studied only one possible ill effect of daycare: poor mother-child bonding. Even one of the study's principal researchers, leading child-development expert Dr. Jay Belsky of Pennsylvania State University, pointed out that the NICHD team declined to test the effect of prolonged exposure to daycare on children's intellectual development or their physical health.

And unfortunately, merely waiting for the children in the survey to grow up won't suffice to get us the answer, because the NICHD set up the terms of its study in a very peculiar way. Most previous research has suggested that twenty hours per week is the point where daycare begins to pose a risk to children in their first year. But the NICHD team broke its sample into three groups: those in daycare fewer than ten hours a week, those in daycare more than thirty hours, and those in daycare for between ten and thirty hours. By lumping together children in daycare for only eleven hours (who are very unlikely to show any ill effect from the experience) with those in daycare for twenty-five or thirty hours (who are much more likely to suffer), the NICHD team virtually guaranteed that it would obtain muddy and uninformative results—results made all the more muddy by the NICHD team's odd understanding of "daycare."

Some twenty-one percent of the children in the team's sample turn out to have spent their "daycare" hours in the care of their fathers. It's very nice to have scientific confirmation that spending time with dad doesn't hurt kids. But what most working mothers would like to know—what the NICHD team carelessly suggested we now do know—is whether spending twenty or more hours a week at the local play center in the care of a stranger is equally harmless. There the NICHD team could not be quite so reassuring.

In fact, one of the unremarked details of the study was that it found that the children of less involved and caring mothers suffered ill effects from as little as ten hours of institutional care per week. The secret hope of many daycare advocates—that professional care can compensate children for bad mothering—is a delusion.

As Belsky observed in a written qualification of the NICHD team's study, "most children who experience lots of nonmaternal care in their first year (whatever the quality or type of care) do not develop insecure attachments to their mothers. But...more time spent in care is associated with increased rates of insecure attachment (a) when the quality of care provided by mothers at home is limited and (to a lesser extent) (b) when children are boys....I do not believe that the findings [of the NICHD team] should lead anyone to be sanguine about the effects of early child care in America." Bolstering Belsky's statements are forty years of scientific inquiry. The studies, varying greatly in quality, tell us that the regular separation of young children from their parents for more than twenty hours per week presents a clear and substantial increase in the risk of insecure bonding with parents.

Still, we know dangerously little about the emotional and cognitive effects of daycare. Nobody would put her child into a car seat as casually tested as institutional daycare has been. And millions of infants will spend most of their waking hours in these places. Are they being damaged? Sooner or later, we'll find out. ◆

Mark Genuis is a counseling psychologist and executive director of the National Foundation for Family Research and Education in Calgary, Alberta.

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Correspondence

Feeling reactionary? Write us! Send your letter to the editor, The Women's Quarterly
2111 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 550, Arlington, Virginia 22201-3057, or fax to 703/243-9230.

Show more sensitivity to the sensitive

MELINDA SIDAK'S ARTICLE "Fainting Ladies" (Spring 1996) questions the reality of Multiple Chemical Sensitivity and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. She suggests that some causes are due to "hysteria," or a desire for attention. Ms. Sidak should read *Osler's Web—Inside the Labyrinth of the Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Epidemic* by Hillary Johnson. Among the cases Johnson cites are Inga Thompson, who was one of the U.S. Olympic Women's Bicycling Team's best cyclists before she came down with CFS, and Gino Olivieri, a former Detroit Lions football star and SWAT team member of the New York City police force. These do not sound like people who dream up psychosomatic complaints to get attention. One patient by the name of Thomas English, himself a surgeon, wrote that "there is nothing in your experience in medical school, residency, or practice with its grueling hours and sleep deprivation that even approaches the fatigue you feel with this illness."

Is it really fair to tell these people that their unconscious mind is striving to present symptoms that seem to be like organic disease, or that they are trying to control others through their sickness? Isn't it possible that we have multiple sets of patients, some with a genuine new serious disorder, and some with mental disorders, and some with misdiagnosed known physical disorders, all lumped together?

My view: let us take these people seriously. We would want the same consideration if we were in their shoes.

GORDON LEVY
New Haven, Connecticut

A reader vents

TWENTY YEARS AGO in college I was an active member of NOW. I fought for abortion

rights, gender neutral pronouns, and revisionist history. I thought we were building a better world. Today it seems every issue of the *Boston Globe* contains more and more stories of child abuse, rape, and murder. My small business barely survives under the growing burden of regulation, taxation, and litigation. I am hiring girls out of high school who can't do math, spell, or write a coherent sentence. I have an honors student who told me that the attack on Pearl Harbor launched the American Revolution. They engage in sex indiscriminately and have abortions without remorse. I want to cry when I think of what the future holds for them.

Our distorted thinking destroyed our families, our children, and our futures. We denigrated life. We politicized education. We threw away the greatest gift this country had to give us: we entrusted our rights to the government instead of to God. How very ironic for my generation that Rush Limbaugh turns out to be a better friend than Eleanor Smeal.

Please pardon me this chance to vent my bitterness. I was thrilled and relieved to read *The Women's Quarterly.* You provide hope that all is not lost. Women such as Lynne Cheney and Wendy Lee Gramm can restore grace, dignity, and intelligence to the feminist movement. I am very grateful.

MARY ANN JULIAN
Wellesley, Massachusetts

The right to life isn't the right to death

A QUARTER CENTURY AGO, when the issue of abortion was being debated, one of the arguments on the right was that abortion would pave the way for euthanasia. We were told that such a thing was unthinkable—never would happen. As I look at recent events—the ban on doctor-assisted suicide lifted in my state, President Clinton refusing to outlaw partial-birth abortions, the shadow of Kevorkian—I know the issue of abortion is so much more than most women realize. The issue is life, and how we value it, or not.

This said, you can imagine how gratified I was that your cover story "The Fetus Beat Us," by Candace Crandall (Winter 1996), was such a cogent report on how the pro-choice movement is slipping. Congratulations.

JACQUELINE PARKER
New York, New York

So long as you're not indifferent

I AM GLAD I discovered your magazine. However, I strongly disliked your "One Last Observation" on the UN conference on women (Autumn 1995). True, the passages you picked [from the platform] have one flaw or another. But I did not like the vicious tone to the critiques. It implied that there is no reason for women to have conferences and discuss how the status of women can be improved. It is hard for me to believe that a woman who appears as intelligent and sincere as Danielle Crittenden appears to be (based on her diary and some of her editorial selections) would either endorse a continuation of the status-quo on matters pertaining to the status of women in our culture, or would endorse such changes and not see the value of conferences facilitating discussions regarding change.

SHOSHANA GROSSBARD-SHECHTMAN
San Diego, California

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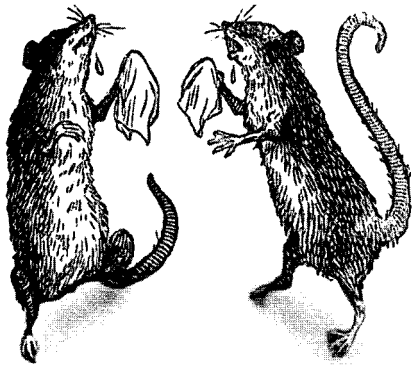
Animal Crackers

Yesterday's crazy cat ladies are today's animal liberationists, observes *Sally Satel.* Too bad they're no longer harmless



The passion of women—especially eccentric, single women—for their cats is well known. Wealthy spinsters devoted to their forty felines have always been the staunchest supporters of local humane societies. Perhaps then it shouldn't be a surprise that the modern-day animal rights movement is dominated by women; indeed the membership of one the most popular—and radical—animal rights groups is three-quarters female. What is a surprise is how much the research their activism disrupts could alleviate female suffering.

You have probably read news reports involving People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA): their members dress up like chickens and Oscar Mayer hotdogs to protest the meat industries, and harass fur-clad ladies who promenade down Fifth Avenue. Their activism receives the glamorous support of Hollywood celebrities, such as Kim Basinger and Alec Baldwin. Less celebrated are PETA's strong ties to a group whose activities the FBI has classified as domestic terrorism: the Animal Liberation Front. Loyally defended by PETA, the ALF claims responsibility for, or has been suspected of, more than one hundred acts of vandalism and arson since 1982. These acts have resulted in damages of at least $10 million, mostly to university laboratories unlucky enough to be targeted and raided at midnight by activists who release animals from their cages, destroy equipment, set fires, and ruin experiments.

Your grandmother's humane society this ain't. But maybe that's exactly the attraction for a younger generation of women who love furry, sweet creatures as much as their grannies did, but who also want to express this affection with a nineties' political twist. Surveys of animal advocates show that women are two to four times more likely than men to be involved with animal rights. Of the 500,000 members of PETA, about seventy-five percent are women, according to spokesman Michael McGraw. Women have smashed through the glass ceiling to sit at the helm or be second-in-command at seven of the top ten animal rights organizations. Women thus dominate one of the nation's fastest growing social crusades. Last year these groups took in over $300 million and now boast a membership of about ten million, up more than four hundred percent in the last decade.

A report in the *Animals' Agenda*—the must-read magazine among animal enthusiasts—described the typical animal rights activist as "a thirty-three-year-old white woman, probably a nurse, school teacher, or government worker with pets, environmental sympathies, a college degree…who is what the sociologists call a classic disaffected leftist—highly educated but underemployed."

Sociologists Rebecca Richards and Richard Krannich, who did a survey of subscribers to the *Animals' Agenda*, found that seventy-three percent were women, with more than half between the ages of thirty and forty-nine. More striking perhaps, was the researchers' discovery that only thirty percent of the readers surveyed had children and just sixteen percent reported actually living with their children. Instead these subscribers resided with an average of 4.7 pets. Yet while they expressed zeal in defending all types of animal life, most respondents explicitly rejected a pro-life stand on abortion.

Similarly, Dr. S. Plout of Wesleyan University, who also studied the animal movement's membership, found

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that eighty percent of a sample of activists were white, college-educated women. Interestingly, the female members were more involved with the movement and expressed stronger views than their male counterparts. For example, women were much more likely to view banning animal research as the "highest priority issue" and to "value nonhuman life at or above human life." Further, more women than men approved of laboratory break-ins. A large majority of both sexes—eighty-four percent—told Plout they did not eat meat.

Indeed, abstaining from meat has always been an important rite of animal activism—but maybe even more important for women. PETA spokesman McGraw believes that it is easier for women to be vegetarians because "they have a natural sympathy for animals who have also been subjugated by men." In *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist Vegetarian Critical Theory*, Carol J. Adams writes, "When I use the term 'the rape of animals,' the experience of women becomes a vehicle for explicating another's oppression."

Ingrid Newkirk, co-founder of PETA, also casts animals in the feminist morality play. "Many feminists sit down to steak dinners like macho men," she wrote in a recent issue of *Las Vegas Review*, "not recognizing that supremacist attitudes towards members of other species are a form of prejudice no less objectionable than prejudice about a person's race or sex." Rejecting such supremacism—or "speciesism" in animal activese—has led many of these women to oppose the very experiments that could one day save their lives.

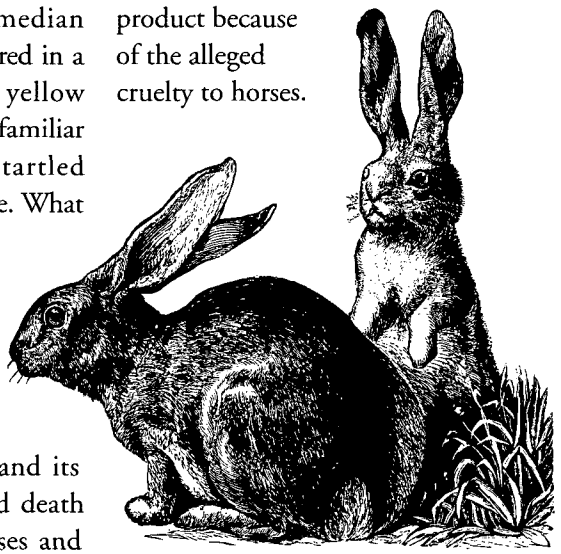
If they had their way, for example, Dr. Thomas Stewart of Ottawa General Hospital would stop his work on natural killer cells in breast cancer. His work on mice investigates why these cells speed breast tumor growth in women. Georgetown University Medical Center would never have developed a vaccine that prevents dogs from developing virus-induced cervical cancer, one that promises to protect women against a related cancer-causing virus. And experiments in bone transplants in mice, being conducted at Jefferson Medical College, would be scrapped, despite the hope they hold out for the twenty million women with osteoporosis in this country.

Yet most PETA members, it is safe to say, are neither social radicals nor enemies of medical progress. "The majority of PETA's financial support comes from an unknowing and unwitting public that thinks it's being kind to animals," says Frankie Trull, president of the Foundation for Biomedical Research.

How, then, has PETA captured their sympathies? Enter comedian Sandra Bernhard, who is pictured in a recent PETA ad sporting a yellow mustache in a parody of the familiar milk ad. Underneath her startled expression, the ad reads, "Urine. What a surprise."

"They say that menopause makes women do strange things" the ad continues. "But swallow horse's urine? Not me! Premarin is made from pregnant mare's urine and its production causes misery and death for tens of thousands of horses and their foals." PETA wants to stop production of Premarin, a natural estrogen replacement therapy for menopausal women, because they believe the horses are maltreated: deprived of water to concentrate the estrogen in the urine, PETA claims, the horses are kept in tiny stalls unable to move and strapped into irritating rubber sacks that collect the urine.

When Wyeth-Ayerst—the pharmaceutical company that has manufactured Premarin for fifty-two years—became concerned about these claims, it hired veterinarian and equine expert Shauna Spurlock to examine its horse farms. "They wanted me to report back on whether I thought the standards used were in keeping with normal equine care and husbandry," Dr. Spurlock said. Her detailed report, published by Spurlock Equine Associates last January, refutes every PETA claim about the maltreatment of mares. Nonetheless, just three months later, PETA protested at the annual meeting of American Home Products—which markets Premarin—in New Jersey. The day before, PETA enthusiast Mary Tyler Moore held a press conference in New York City, condemning the product because of the alleged cruelty to horses.



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But those who would actually suffer if Premarin were taken off the market are the eight million menopausal women in the United States who rely on it to suppress hot flashes and other distressing symptoms. Estrogen replacement may also lower risk for heart disease and osteoporosis. But like many of the celebrities who donate their time to PETA ad campaigns, Bernhardt and Moore join thousands of women who buy the PETA hype about cruelty.

Medical benefits aside, is animal research actually cruel—and as cruel as PETA and other groups consistently make it out to be? "They draw in some very well meaning people, *especially* well meaning people, with a litany of lies and half-truths," says Dr. Frederick Goodwin, research psychiatrist and former head of the National Institute of Mental Health. Perhaps the most effective of the lies, Goodwin says, is that research is inherently painful to the animal. "PETA's literature is filled with horrific images of experimental animals. It's ghastly stuff but it's not animal research, where we routinely use anaesthesia."

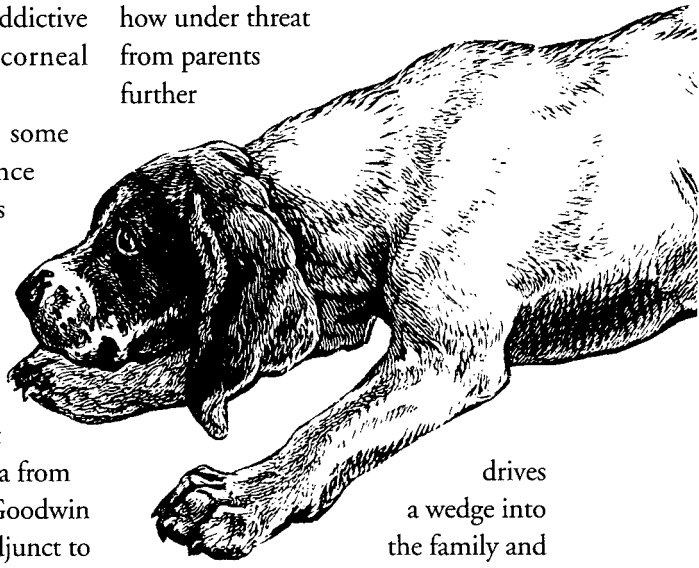
Pain is actually not the issue for hard core activists. "Even painless research is fascism, supremacism," says Newkirk. In his popular book, *The Case for Animal Rights*, Tom Regan writes, "Humans have no basic right to not be harmed by those natural diseases we are heir to." And Priscilla Feral, president of Friends of Animals, told a reporter, "Even if [experiments] are done painlessly, human beings have no right to the knowledge gained from experimentation on animals."

Another PETA myth is that data derived from tests on animals cannot be extrapolated reliably to humans. The truth is that animal tests are often the critical first step in the multi-level, drug approval process. What's more, animal studies have been essential in developing such breakthroughs as the polio vaccine, insulin for diabetics, development of non-addictive painkillers, and organ and corneal transplants.

That was then; but today, some activists insist, medical science no longer requires animals because computers and tissue cultures can model living organisms. Not so. "The notion that you could program a computer to find out fundamental facts about nature without having any data from living systems defies logic," Goodwin says. "Models do serve as an adjunct to use of animals in research," he adds, "but they are not a substitute."

Having won over women, PETA is now hoping to capture the interest of children. Over the last few years the group has invested millions in a comprehensive strategy to drum up sympathy—and membership—in America's high school students. "They call it education, but it's more like youth indoctrination," remarks Kathleen Marquardt, whose thirteen-year-old daughter came home from a PETA seminar calling her mother a murderer because she hunts. By visiting high schools across the country, Marquardt, president of the citizen's group Putting People First, attempts to undo the animal rights message— "that their meat-eating, hog-raising, leather-wearing parents are the enemy."

Marquardt has to respect her adversaries. "Even if they are malignant," she says, "the PETA people are geniuses" at exploiting the often stormy relations between adolescents and their parents. "Think about it," Marquardt says. "Sometimes the pets are the one household member kids feel close to. So portraying their dog or cat as somehow under threat from parents further drives a wedge into the family and seduces the disaffected kid into becoming closer to the movement."



Marquardt has a tough road ahead because PETA is hot these days. "Teens have flocked to the movement," reports the *Wall Street Journal*, "after seeing endorsements by movie stars like Kim Basinger, Alec Baldwin, and rock groups like the B-52s, R.E.M., and Indigo Girls." Promotional literature is often available at rock concerts. All-day free seminars entitled Animal Rights 101 teach students how to pursue a "cruelty-free lifestyle," eat a "compassionate diet," and "put pressure on industries that exploit animals."

Clearly, the success of the animal rights movement in convincing thousands that animal research is both painful and superfluous proves, at least, that the public will believe simple lies over complex truths. This

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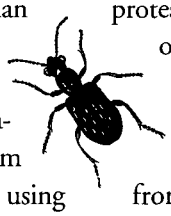
includes Congress, which was pressured into adding new layers of regulation to the Animal Welfare Act in 1985 at a cost of about a half-billion dollars, according to the National Association for Biomedical Research. Several years ago, Congresswoman Barbara Boxer (D-California), sympathetic to animal rights lobbying, wrote successful legislation withdrawing funding from ongoing projects on bone repair using dogs, and Representative Robert Livingston (R-Louisiana) stopped a head injury research project using cats.



Yet another strategy, perfected by PETA, is the leveraging of its charitable contributions by unleashing a torrent of litigation against federal agencies, research facilities, and universities. Under the auspices of the Animal Legal Defense Fund, founded in 1983, these lawsuits have successfully stalled research projects and caused funds earmarked for research to be diverted to pay for lawyers and animal care.

And despite PETA's high proportion of female members, it does not shy away from bullying and intimidating female victims. Dr. Sharon Juliano, a medical researcher at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, was stalked by activists protesting her use of cats in a study on neurological disorders. For four months in 1991, activists picketed weekly, then held nightly candlelight vigils, in front of her home in a Maryland suburb. They barricaded her driveway and plastered her neighborhood with leaflets accusing her of torturing animals. Juliano, with the support of her medical school, continued her work, but for others the pressure was too great.

Dr. Michiko Okamoto of Cornell University School of Medicine shut down her addiction research and returned a $600,000 grant to the National Institute on Drug Abuse after activists led demonstrations at her medical school, resulting in some ten thousand postcards and letters of protest, and inquiries from eighty congressional offices.

While seventy percent of Americans approve of using animals to test medical treatments "under some circumstances" (AP poll, November 1995) the animal rights groups—PETA most prominently—have successfully convinced a small but potent group that biomedical research is a mean-spirited and gratuitous enterprise divorced from any benefit. Yet backing away from using animals in research would deal a death blow to medical progress and public health, not least of all to the progress made in understanding and treating female diseases.

Perhaps the next time these activists wish to save a cat, they should simply go down to their humane society and adopt one (or forty) as their grandmothers did. ◆

Sally Satel is a lecturer at the Yale University School of Medicine and a frequent writer on health issues. She has two cats.

MURDER PAC

Which bodies have the most lobbying power on Capitol Hill? Women's, of course.

Richard J. Gelles, director of the Family Violence Research Program at the University of Rhode Island, passes along the following set of statistics: in 1994, some 1,500 women were murdered by their husbands, ex-husbands, and boyfriends; 4,000 youths (aged fourteen to seventeen) were murdered by their peers; and 1,200 children were killed by their parents. [These figures, rounded to the nearest hundred, are the most recent available from the FBI and the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect.]

Meanwhile, the federal programs specifically targeted at curbing these problems will receive the following appropriations in 1996: $228 million for the Violence Against Women Act; $160 million for the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act; and $58 million for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.

Gelles notes that "there are other agencies that provide funds for these issues and the total funds for each is higher if all other federal progams are totalled. However, these represent the concentration of federal efforts for each of these three social issues."

Clearly, children have not learned the lesson of their mothers: that is, if you want your voice heard in Washington, you're going to have to scream a little louder. ◆

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One last observation . . .

Endangered White Males

Olivia Vlahos bemoans our indifference to a dying breed of man

Once upon a time the respectful young tipped their hats deferentially to elderly white males. Today nobody wears hats, and old white males are easy pickings, not only for city thugs, but for upscale suburban bravos out to prove their mastery of the world. Never mind that the senior citizen movement has acquired political clout. Seniors on their own fall like nine-pins before the onrush of youth. Old white males, always less likely than old women to call attention to their vulnerability, are especially prey to the lions of self-esteem. I should know. I live with one.

Just the other day, on his way back to the car, purchases in hand, my husband was flung violently aside by a young buck shouting, "Out of my way, old man!" as he raced to his waiting Ferrari. These confrontations always seem to involve the automobile. Countless are the horn blasts, side-swipes, and cut-offs we have experienced with my husband at the wheel. We have been followed into parking lots by angry speedsters spoiling for combat. "Hey, Pops, wanna fight?"

One such fellow was deterred by the sight of our huge bull mastiff; another by the Beautiful Daughter who stared fixedly at her father's would-be assailant and scornfully drawled, "Lose weight."

Dogs and daughters are wonderful equalizers for the old white male. Simpler cultures offer more reliable means of putting the young in their place. In some, the old are believed to possess the power to curse. The superannuated Comanche warrior, denied a hero's death in battle, was expected to vent his disappointment through the practice of sorcery. Young warriors, careful of their reputation and careers, gave him a wide berth.

American culture has always celebrated tomorrow and the changes it was expected to bring. It has, accordingly, placed its accent on youth. Age is the past. Ignore the past. Shoulder it aside. No wonder today's young men feel free to do just that.

They are not alone. Young women, trying their level best to imitate young men (warts and all), are doing plenty of shouldering on their own. But if young men shoulder with their cars, young Amazons prefer doors. And for the old white male, bound to yesterday's rules of chivalry, this is the unkindest cut of all.

My husband has opened many a door for passing damsels only to be roundly cursed for his pains. Once he returned to the car dripping blood. The beneficiary of his courtesy had slammed the door on his hand.

"What is the world coming to?" he wondered, his face pale with shock. "Don't they know that opening a door is a mark of respect ?"

I raged inwardly, longing to smash the pretty creature who visited such humiliation—not to mention injury—on my dear, good, gentle guy; loving husband, tender father, faithful friend. Finally I joked, "I can see I'll have to ride shotgun wherever you go from now on."

Then I remembered the curse nobody escapes: the curse of accumulating birthdays. One day the Lords and Ladies of Assertiveness will themselves be gray, withered, bent. One day they, too, will be shouldered aside. One day they will fall victim to predators yet unborn, predators almost certain to be even more ruthless and unconcerned. Why? Because tomorrow's young will have grown up without models of decorum, without even an echo of things past, of courtesies practised long ago.

I almost pity today's predators their "golden years." Until the next side-swipe, and the next look of shock on my husband's face. ◆

Olivia Vlahos is a retired anthropologist and the author of seven books in her field.

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"Impressively accomplished"

–*the* Washington Post*'s Megan Rosenfeld on the IWF*

For the past three years, the Independent Women's Forum has been taking on the old establishment of feminist organizations—and winning. "The IWF has a profile almost unheard of for a group that is the new kid on the block," writes the *Boston Globe*. "In the marketplace of ideas, from the national news media all the way down to local radio, the IWF has shown its real strength.... [The] IWF is well on its way to becoming the foremost media nemesis of the feminist movement."

Why has the IWF been so successful? Because the women who make up the IWF are not radical ideologues —they're businesswomen, economists, lawyers, truck drivers, and also mothers. Because the IWF promotes individual responsibility, strong families, limited government, and opportunity—policies that help *all* Americans. Because the IWF, a non-partisan, non-profit Washington-based organization, sponsors speaker events and conferences noted for their provocative and free-ranging debates. And because the IWF publishes *The Women's Quarterly*—an intellectual antidote to *Ms.*—which syndicated columnist Mona Charen praises as, "My type of women's magazine! With humor and sarcasm but also with warmth and passion, these women offer an intelligent refutation of the leading feminist nonsense that is swallowed so uncritically by the mainstream press."

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